WHAT IS THE FUTURE FOR RUSSIA?

In 1938 Metropolitan Anastasy, first-hierarch of the Russian Church Abroad, wrote: “There is nothing more dangerous than if Russia were to want to assimilate anything from the sad inheritance left by degenerate Bolshevism: everything that its corrupting atheist hand has touched threatens to infect us again with the old leprosy.”

The metropolitan’s words have proved to be prophetic. When the Soviet Union fell in 1991, there were many who rejoiced in the supposed fall of Bolshevism. But there was no root-and-branch purge: Lenin remained in his mausoleum; the Communist party continued to exist, albeit weakened; the KGB, after a brief scare, strengthened its grip on the country; the Red Army regained its red flag and Soviet anthem (the music, if not the words); there was no trial of anyone, in Russia or in any of the other former communist countries of Eastern Europe, for any of the tens of millions of murders carried out during the Bolshevik regime (the Communist party itself was “acquitted” in 1992); the Moscow Patriarchate, that Stalinist creation of 1943, remained in power and greatly increased in wealth; the True Church remained humiliated.

With the coming to power in 2000 of KGB Colonel V.V. Putin, “the old leprosy” began to re-infect the country with a vengeance. The fall of the Soviet Union has now been pronounced to be “a geopolitical tragedy”; the old persecution and murder of dissidents has returned; the old practice of intimidating and/or invading neighbouring countries has re-appeared (the invasion of Georgia, it is now revealed, was planned two years before); the old hatred of America and all things western has re-emerged, while all things western continue to be enjoyed by the elite; Stalin has been rehabilitated, his victory in 1945 declared to be a “feast of feasts” when he “trampled upon death by death”! In some ways, things are even worse now than under Bolshevism: the poor are poorer, the rich are richer, the sick are sicker (drug-addiction, sexual diseases and child mortality are far higher than in Soviet times), the corruption is more all-pervasive, the propaganda is more powerful, the official church is more hypocritical and heretical and thoroughly “without excuse” before God and man…

Have there been any gains in the period? Yes, mainly in the sphere of freedom of speech and freedom of religion. Now nobody is sent to prison for their religious beliefs (unless they qualify as “extremist”), anyone who wants to can learn the truth about the Soviet period, and the internet leaves very few crevices into which the neo-Soviet elite can hide their secrets. But Putin’s propaganda machine and corrupt legal system appear to have reversed the

gains made under Yeltsin. And just as an organism learns to resist the effects of antibiotics over time, so the Russian people appears to have become inured to revelations of the evils of their leaders.

Before the revolution, St. John of Kronstadt said that Russia without the tsar would be “a stinking corpse”. The corpse continues to stink. And nobody in power is trying to take it out of the room…

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And yet there is clear evidence that Putin is worried. He seems to be softening his “macho” image - the release of Khodorkovsky and the “Pussy Riot” activists is seen by many as a sign of weakness. Over the last two years or so the intelligentsia have begun to lose their fear of the regime and to take part in protests and marches. The continuing demonstrations in Kiev have done nothing for Putin’s reputation as “tsar” of the Russian “near-abroad”. Even Lukashenko’s Stalinist regime in Belarus’ is beginning to open up towards the West.

Among the workers and peasants inside Russia there are signs of discontent. Although the pensioners’ protest of a few years ago has not been repeated, their conditions have not improved. The boom years (for the rich) certainly appear to be over: GDP has dropped while the export of capital has increased; there have been reports of near-starvation conditions in a Urals town; and central heating has still not come to parts of Omsk, situated not far from Russia’s vast oil and gas fields, while petrol for cars in oil-rich Russia is more expensive than in America. Russia still has, comparatively speaking, small debts and large sovereign reserves. But these reserves are not being spent on the poor and needy, or in developing Russia’s infrastructure, but on the army and the siloviki (secret-service) – and on bribing the Ukrainians to remain onside…

As Putin’s popularity declines, he is turning – highly ironically for a former member of the KGB’s fifth department, which harassed believers – to the Moscow Patriarchate for support, and into a supporter of Russia’s “traditional values”. This has meant a mild crack-down on homosexuals in State and Church (the crackdown has to be mild, because there is a powerful gay lobby in the Church), and loud proclamations that Russia is now occupying the moral high ground in relation to the corrupt and gay-ridden West. As the neo-Soviet State and neo-Soviet Church, both led by fabulously rich and impenitent KGB agents, huddle together for warmth on their morally pure hilltop, it becomes hard to choose which is the more mind-bogglingly hypocritical…

When Putin became Prime Minister in 1999, he promised to clear up the mess in Chechnya. To that end, the KGB staged the

destruction of an apartment block in Ryazan and put the blame on Chechen terrorists – which gave Putin the excuse he needed to invade the country again. But the South Russia and the North Caucasus are still highly unstable, as the recent bombings in Volgograd have shown. If such incidents combine with more boycotts of the Sochi Winter Olympics by European leaders to threaten the success of that projected Putin showcase (showcase, that is, of the vast corruption of his regime), Putin may be tempted to undertake a larger-scale, more thorough resolution of the problem on his southern border. He may invade the North Caucasus, go on to complete the conquest of Georgia, and then, with the support of the Armenians, the Kurds and the Iranians, head for Syria and Iraq, where he already has an ill-deserved reputation as a defender of Christians…

If this sounds a highly risky and implausible scenario, we should remember that risky foreign adventures are often resorted to by dictators whose position at home has become shaky. It could certainly be popular in Russia, and not only among his traditional supporters. Even the supposedly anti-Putinist Khodorkovsky has said he is a nationalist of a kind, and would definitely go to fight for Russia in the Caucasus (where, he predicted, "millions" would die).

Now in the 38th and 39th chapters of the Prophet Ezekiel we read of an invasion of Israel undertaken "during the last times" and "from the extreme north" by a coalition of nations called **Gog and Magog**. Most ancient commentators identified Gog and Magog with the region north of the Black Sea, which is now South Russia.[1] The coalition is led by a prince called **Ros, "**Ρως" in the Greek of the Greek Old Testament, which is the ancient name for Russia.[2] Ros rules over **Mosoch** (or Mesech), which may refer to Moscow[3], and **Tubal**, which, according to Blessed Theodoretus of Cyrus, is

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[1] cf. Josephus, *On Antiquities*, VI, 1; St. Proclus of Constantinople, in Socrates' *Ecclesiastical History*, VII, 41.

[2] Thus St. Photius the Great used the same word when referring to the Russian attack on Constantinople in 860. Cf. Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov: "In the 38th and 39th chapters of the Prophet Ezekiel is described the power and numerousness of a northern people called **Ros**; this people must attain a huge level of material development before the end of the world, and by its end will bring to an end the history of the wandering of the human race on earth…" (Letter to N.N. Muraviev-Karsky, May 14, 1863)

[3] Plumptre (*The Bible Educator*, London: Cassell, Petter & Green, vol. III, p. 251) writes: "The name Gog seems to be found in the name Gogarene, a district of Armenia, west of the Caspian (Strabo, xi, 528)... [Mesech] are generally identified with the Moschi, a race inhabiting part of the country between the Euxine and Caspian seas, and who were subdued by Tiglath-pileser I. They were neighbours to Tubal, a race dealing in iron, a branch of trade for which the south-east coast of the Euxine was early famous. The name Muscovy is thought with fair probability to be derived from Meshech (Rawlinson, *Ancient Monuments* ii. 65)." Henry Morris (*The Genesis Record*, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1976, pp. 247-248) believes **Mosoch** (or Mesech) to be Moscow.

Georgia.[4] The coalition, after conquering many countries, comes to grief “on the mountains of Israel”, and seven years are required to gather up all the debris from that battle…

Could the prophet be referring to the bloody end of Putin’s regime in the midst of a fateful Middle Eastern venture? Such a conclusion must be considered to be speculative, and yet there are many intriguing parallels between the prophetic narrative and the present-day situation. Suggestive also is the position of the narrative, coming as it does immediately after Ezekiel chapter 37, which may refer to the gathering of the Jews to their homeland and the resurrection of the State of Israel, and immediately before chapter 40, which refers to the building of what may be the Third Temple in Jerusalem…

If we turn to the testimony of the Russian saints and prophets, especially those of the twentieth century, then it is clear that Bolshevism will finally perish in a huge war, and will be followed by the resurrection of truly Russian statehood under a truly Orthodox tsar. Let us conclude by citing some of these prophecies:-

1. Archbishop Anthony of Voronezh (+1846): “Constantinople and Jerusalem will be taken by the combined forces of Russia and others. During the partition of Turkey, almost all of it will be apportioned to Russia…”

2. Elder Porphyrius of Glinsk (+1868): "In due course, faith will collapse in Russia. The brilliance of earthly glory will blind the mind. The word of truth will be defiled, but with regard to the Faith, some from among the people, unknown to the world, will come forward and restore what was scorned."[5]

3. Archimandrite Jonah (Miroshnichenko) (+1902): “You will see what will happen in fifty years’ time: everyone will forsake the Law of God and will fall away from the faith, but then they will again come to their senses and turn back and live in a Christian manner.”[6]

4. Elder Barnabas of Gethsemane Skete (+1906): "Persecutions against the faith will constantly increase. There will be unheard-of grief and darkness, and almost all the churches will be closed. But when it will seem that it is impossible to endure any longer, then deliverance will come. There will be a flowering. Churches will even begin to be built. But this will be a flowering before the end."[7]

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[4] Blessed Theodoretus, *Commentary on Isaiah*, 66.19.
[5] Elder Porphyrius, in Fr. Theodosius Clare, *The Glinsk Patericon*, Wildwood, CA: St. Xenia Skete, 1984, p. 129.
[6] Fomin, S. & Fomina, T. *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestviem*, Sergiev Posad, 1998, third edition, volume II, p. 331 (in Russian).
[7] Elder Barnabas, in Fr. Seraphim Rose, "The Future of Russia and the End of the World", *The Orthodox Word*, 1981, vol. 17, nos. 100-101, p. 211. Most of Fr.

5. St. John of Kronstadt (+1908): “I foresee the restoration of a powerful Russia, still stronger and mightier than before. On the bones of these martyrs, remember, as on a strong foundation, will the new Russia we built - according to the old model; strong in her faith in Christ God and in the Holy Trinity! And there will be, in accordance with the covenant of the holy Prince Vladimir, a single Church! Russian people have ceased to understand what Rus’ is: it is the footstool of the Lord’s Throne! The Russian person must understand this and thank God that he is Russian”.[8]

“The Church will remain unshaken to the end of the age, and a Monarch of Russia, if he remains faithful to the Orthodox Church, will be established on the Throne of Russia until the end of the age.”[9]

6. Elder Aristocles of Moscow (+1918): "An evil will shortly take Russia, and wherever this evil goes, rivers of blood will flow. It is not the Russian soul, but an imposition on the Russian soul. It is not an ideology, nor a philosophy, but a spirit from hell. In the last days Germany will be divided. France will be just nothing. Italy will be judged by natural disasters. Britain will lose her empire and all her colonies and will come to almost total ruin, but will be saved by praying enthroned women.[10] America will feed the world, but will finally collapse. Russia and China will destroy each other. Finally, Russia will be free and from her believers will go forth and turn many from the nations to God."[11]

"Now we are undergoing the times before the Antichrist. But Russia will yet be delivered. There will be much suffering, much torture. The whole of Russia will become a prison, and one must greatly entreat the Lord for forgiveness. One must repent of one's sins and fear to do even the least sin, but strive to do good, even the smallest. For even the wing of a fly has weight, and God's scales are exact. And when even the smallest of good in the cup tips the balance, then will God reveal His mercy upon Russia."

"The end will come through China. There will be an extraordinary outburst and a miracle of God will be manifested. And there will be an entirely different life, but all this will not be for long."

"God will remove all leaders, so that Russian people should look only at Him. Everyone will reject Russia, other states will renounce

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Seraphim's quotations were taken from *Orthodox Russia*, N 21, 1969.

[8] St. John of Kronstadt, in Fomin, op. cit., p. 249. Fomin and Fomina, vol. II, p. 331.

[9] Fomin and Fomina, op. cit., p. 338.

[10] Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov writes: "The thrones of the saints are their dominion over the passions” (*On Signs and Wonders*, Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, 1960).

[11] Schema-Monk Epiphanius (Chernov), personal communication.

her, delivering her to herself – this is so that Russian people should hope on the help of the Lord. You will hear that in other countries disorders have begun similar to those in Russia. You will hear of war, and there will be wars. But wait until the Germans take up arms, for they are chosen as God's weapon to punish Russia – but also as a weapon of deliverance later. The Cross of Christ will shine over the whole world and our Homeland will be magnified and will become as a lighthouse in the darkness for all."[12]

7. Martyr-Eldress Duniushka of Siberia (+1918): "Brother will rise up against brother! They will destroy everything acquired by their ancestors…. They will sweep away religion, and -- most importantly -- there will be no master in the land! The master in the land, of course, is the Tsar' – God's Anointed One! He cannot go anywhere. This trouble will come upon everyone and grind them up, as though in a meat-grinder… The war will end, and its end will turn the whole country upside-down. Insurgents will appear – leaders – who will incite the people against the Tsar'…. It will be terrible!

"And later, they will seize upon religion. They will sweep away that which has been gathered through the ages and assiduously preserved by our ancestors. But it will be impossible for them to root it out; the roots will remain – and, after many years, they'll give forth a most-beautiful bloom and fruit….

"The Tsar will leave the nation, which shouldn't be, but this has been foretold to him from Above. This is His destiny. There is no way that He can evade it. For this, He will receive a martyr's crown on earth, for which He'll receive, subsequently, an eternal crown, a Heavenly one…. He will be a prayerful Intercessor for the nation and the people, when the chastisement fallen upon dozens of generations for the harm done to God's Anointed One will reach an end…. The generations to come will bear the responsibility for this act on the part of their ancestors.

"The disaster in the land will disperse the people; they will be scattered to various countries, losing touch with one another. But, wherever Russians go, they will bring their culture and their religion.

"At the far end of Russia, there will be an enormous earthquake. The waters will break out of the ocean, flooding the continent, and many nations will perish. Many diseases beyond understanding will appear…. The face of the earth will change…. The people will

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[12] Elder Aristocles, in Rose, "The Future of Russia", op. cit.; Fomin & Fomina, *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestviem*, p. 435; "To the Memory of Abbess Barbara", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 33, no. 4, July-August, 1983, and I.K. Sursky, *Father John of Kronstadt*, Belgrade, 1941, p. 325. St. John of Kronstadt also prophesied that the deliverance of Russia would come from the East (Sursky, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 24), as did the Elder Theodosius of Minvody (Schema-Monk Epiphanius (Chernov), *The Catacomb Church in the Russian Land* (typescript, Mayford, 1980).

comprehend their guilt; they will come to understand how far they have departed from God and from His teachings, and then they will begin to be reborn spiritually, gradually being cleansed physically, as well. People will become vegetarians. By that time, many animals will have vanished. The horse and the dog will only be seen in pictures; and later – the cow, the goat, and the sheep will disappear forever from our planet.... People will no longer be interested in politics, and the spiritual principle of each nation will predominate...

"Russia will be supreme in the world. Her name will be 'Holy Rus'. All sects and religions will pour into Orthodoxy.... But Orthodoxy, and -- essentially speaking -- religion, will draw closer to what it was in Apostolic times. . . . In those centuries to come, there will no longer be any tsars or kings. In 'Holy Rus', a Prince will reign, who will come from the nation that gave us our religion [i.e., Byzantium or Greece]. He will be a supremely spiritual person, who will provide the opportunity for uplifting the moral fibre and the spiritual principles of the nation....

"In the course of one of those ages, Asia will bestir herself; she will try to penetrate into Europe, but her attempts will be futile. No one will ever overcome 'Holy Rus', and only through her will salvation come to the world..."[13]

8 Elder Anatolius (Potapov) of Optina (+1922) "There will be a storm. And the Russian ship will be destroyed. Yes, it will happen, but, you know, people can be saved on splinters and wreckage. Not all, not all will perish..." But he also prophesied that canonical unity would be restored: "A great miracle of God will be revealed. And all the splinters and wreckage will, by the will of God and His might, be gathered together and united, and the ship will be recreated in its beauty and will go along the path foreordained for it by God. That's how it will be, a miracle manifest to all..."[14]

9. Elder Alexis (Mechev) of Moscow (+1922): "When the time comes, God will send the necessary people, who will do this work [the salvation of Russia] and will annihilate the Bolsheviks in the same way that a storm breaks the wood of a mast."[15]

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[13] St. Duniushka, http://www.geocities.com/kitezhgrad/prophets/duniushka.html. Excerpted from the Diary of) V. Zarskaya-Altayeva. Translated into English by G. Spruksts, from the Russian text appearing in "The Russian Community Bulletin Of Seattle", vol. 16, No. 161, March 1986, pp. 3 - 6. English language translation copyright © 1986, 2002 (with revisions) by The Russian Cultural Heritage Society, The St. Stefan Of Perm' Guild, and the Translator. All rights reserved.

[14] Elder Anatolius, in Rose, op. cit.; *The Russian Pilgrim*, N 7, 1993, p. 38; Fomin and Fomina, op. cit., p. 333.

[15] Elder Alexis, in Sursky, op. cit., p. 196; Fomin and Fomina, op. cit., p. 332..

10. Elder Nectarius of Optina (+1928): "Russia will arise, and materially she will not be wealthy. But in spirit she will be wealthy, and in Optina there will yet be seven luminaries, seven pillars."[16]

11. Hieroconfessor Priest George of Spas-Chekryak (+1928): “The main cause of people’s woes is our sinful life and apostasy from God. But this will pass. Through sorrows and sufferings Russia will be purified from sins and will return to God. The Heavenly Queen will not abandon our people and will pray for us to her Son and our Saviour Jesus Christ. When this happens, the icon of the Kazan Mother of God will appear and will be glorified for a third time.”

12. Martyr-Eldress Agatha of Belorussia (+1939): "The atheist Soviet power will vanish, and all its servants will perish. The True Orthodox Faith will triumph, and people will be baptized as at one time they were baptized under St. Vladimir."[17]

13. Archbishop Theophan of Poltava (+1940): "The coming of the Antichrist draws nigh and is very near. But before the coming of the Antichrist Russia must yet be restored - to be sure, for a short time. And in Russia there must be a Tsar forechosen by the Lord Himself. He will be a man of burning faith, great mind and iron will. This much has been revealed about him....”[18]

“He will not be a Romanov, but he will be of the Romanovs according to the maternal line."[19]

"I do not speak from myself. But that which I have heard from the God-inspired elders, that I have passed on... The Lord will have mercy on Russia for the sake of the small remnant of true believers. In Russia, the elders said, in accordance with the will of the people, the Monarchy, Autocratic power, will be re-established. The Lord has forechosen the future Tsar. He will be a man of fiery faith, having the mind of a genius and a will of iron. First of all he will introduce order in the Orthodox Church, removing all the untrue, heretical and lukewarm hierarchs. And many, very many - with few exceptions, all - will be deposed, and new, true, unshakeable hierarchs will take their place. He will be of the family of the Romanovs according to the female line. Russia will be a powerful state, but only for 'a short time'... And then the Antichrist will come into the world, with all the horrors of the end as described in the Apocalypse."[20]

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[16] Elder Nectarius, in Rose, op. cit.
[17] Martyr-Eldress Agatha, in I.M. Andreyev, op. cit., pp. 422-423.
[18] Fomin & Fomina, op. cit., p. 436.
[19] Archbishop Theophan, in Schema-Monk Epiphanius (Chernov), personal communication; Fomin & Fomina, op. cit., p. 436.
[20] Archbishop Theophan, in Betts, Marchenko, op. cit., pp. 111-112; Fomin & Fomina, op. cit., p. 436.

"O Russia, Russia! Russia has sinned before God. The Lord had blessed Russia so that she should give to the world what no other people had given. But the Russian people has shown itself to be ungrateful, it has denied God. It has abandoned Him and that is why God has delivered her to the demons who are now torturing her. The demons have entered into the soul of people, as is recounted in the Gospel, and the people of Russia is now possessed by the demon… And everything that we hear said about what is happening in Russia – the impure deeds, the struggle against God, the blasphemies, all that comes from the possession by the demon… But this possession, by the ineffable Mercy of God towards His people, will come to an end. The people will repent and recover the faith. What nobody foresaw will take place. Russia will be resurrected. Orthodoxy will be reborn from its ashes and will triumph. But Orthodoxy such as it existed before will not be reborn.

"I do not speak in my name, I am doing nothing but repeat what has been revealed to the great saints of God… Yes, it has been said: 'Russia will arise again!' The Lord will have mercy on Russia because of the small flock of faithful who will be preserved. The people itself will restore in her the Orthodox monarchy. And it will put a powerful tsar on the throne. God Himself will point him out. He will be the 'renewer', the 'reformer' of Russia, as was Peter, but he will be motivated by a solid and true Orthodox faith. He will chase away the unfaithful hierarchs… By his intelligence he will be a genius, by the purity of his soul – a saint, and by the force of his will – a flawless diamond. He will be of the Romanov dynasty through the female line.

"He will be a man of fervent faith, brilliant intelligence and iron will. In the first place, he will re-establish order in the bosom of the Orthodox Church, sending away the bad bishops, the lukewarm and heretical. And many, many will be sent away, almost all, and new bishops, true ones with unshakeable faith, will be established in their place…

"He will be a true elect of God, obedient to God in all things. He will transform Siberia… But this Russia will not last long… Soon after will begin that which was spoken of in the Apocalypse of St. John."

14. Elder Theodosius (Kashin) of Minvody (+1948), shortly after the outbreak of war with Germany in 1941: "Do you really think that that was the war (1941-45)?! The war is still to come. It will begin from the east. And then from all sides, like locusts, the enemies will spread over Russia... That will be the war!"[21]

December 20 / January 2, 2013 / 2014.
St. John of Kronstadt.

[21] Chernov, op. cit.

St. Anthony, Archbishop of Voronezh.